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CLOSING DAYS.
BY ARLEY N. BALDWIN.
The plashing breakers on the beach seem to the listening ear To wail a soft plaintive dirge for the departing year.
The yellow leaves, whirled o'er the path by the sharp autumn breeze, In eddying circles are falling fast from all the rustling trees.
The frost-buds sparkle on the grass, bright in the chilly dawn; The mistletoe through holly leaves hangs on the rosy awn.
The horticulturist glows to show her white and rosy flowers— Here tokens that have fled at last the summer's golden hours.
Black berries on the privet hang, the ash shows clusters red, Crow'd with a scarlet shadow, King Oak's majesty head.
The elm is orange, the queen beech is robed in russet brown, And from the graceful pendent birch down leaves come showering down.
Ah, event and solemn are the days that mark the dying year, Waking like mist the heart some slumbering memory dear— Of those gone by, of friends long dead, of happy fleeting hours.
When our fond youth was one long dream of love and joy and ease.

PATTY PAYNE PAPERS.

By MARGERY LAIRD.

All the world and its poor relations (especially the poor relations, who hope to get so much a page for the story), are relating wonderful things of men and women a hundred years ago; but I can only go back a quarter of a century, and tell you something about the business and the goodness of poor little Patty Payne.
Everybody nowadays has heard of Max and Maurine, "those bad boys," who came to grief through deceitful tricks and general naughtiness, and when I read, for the first time, that lamentable history, I closed the small green volume, and handed it to my sister, who said, "Dear, whoever wrote that book must have heard of Patty Payne." And you shall all hear of her. For a more peculiar, preening, erratic little person never was known—looking like blue ribbon and sat in the minister's pew. She had a checked silk, I remember—a cool, lovely gray—made with a very long waist and buttoning sleeves, and she wore a white lagoon hat with ribbons tied in a great bow under her soft chin. When she used to come into church, shily, with drooping eyelids, and settle herself demurely down among the faded cushions, she looked as incapable of mischief as a sucking dove. Dr. Payne, high up in a pulpit like a big golden, would frown at her over his spectacles; and the way Patty sat under his preaching, a sweet little Puritan, with her hands folded under her knees, would have melted a heart of stone.
How such a stray over into the doctor's family was a mystery to those who knew them. There they sat in the square, high-backed pew, a long row of sleek flaxen heads and shining morning faces—an orderly, well-mannered minister's family of girls and boys—and there sat Patty at the head of them, the very incarnation of demure perverseness, and yet outwardly the best behaved of the flock.
Was she pretty? Not—exactly, but she was decidedly unique! She was short and slim, with small soft china-blue eyes, and she wore her hair, which was almost red, drawn straight back with a black velvet band like a fillet, and twisted into a low knot on her neck. She had a graceful little head set very straight on a fair round throat, and her skin was so white as milk. But nobody ever thought about Patty Payne's fairness or features, they were so secondary to that odd taking something about her—a something that nobody ever analysed—about her movements and manner, the turn of her head and the drop of her lashes; and she could charm a lecture into a carousal in a way that was truly magical. There was only one person that she never disarmed. Dr. Payne, though a truly good man, was of the straightest sect, and never gave up exacting titles of mint, anise and cummin from poor Patty, the child of whose soul could only grow as yet threshold and wilderness and waste.
Patty and I were wonderful friends, and I was always the one who helped her out of her scrapes, sympathetic with her sorrows, and honestly thought nothing sweeter than her sober kitchen ways.
One day Patty came up to see me with an unusually long face. It was October, and I was in the front yard taking up my flowers—Hugh was an old bachelor and had no one but me to look after things—and I ran forward to meet her, taking her dear little face between my palms and kissing it two or three times before she could say a word. When she did it was not enthusiastic.
"Your hands are dirty," she remarked, trying to curl her small straight nose, and I knew at once that Patty was out of temper with herself. So I let her alone.
I worked away at my roses, and asked



"HER PUCKERED OLD FACE PEERED AT HER FROM UNDER HER DOWNY CAP PRIMA IN A WAY THAT MADE MY FLESH CREEP."

her no questions. She stood for some time pretending to watch me, she was leaning against the railing of the porch languidly rubbing her cheeks with her handkerchief, and looking both sulky and guilty. At last I turned around.
"Patty Payne," I said, solemnly, "you have been in some mischief?" and I fixed her with my glittering eyes.
"Don't!" she pouted, laughing uneasily. "You glare at me just like father. I have been at home all morning, darned my stockings and hearing Tom read."
"Patty Payne," I responded, severely, "if you hadn't been in mischief you would never come to me with that innocent, injured air."
"I think I will wash my face!" cried Miss Patty, darting up the steps.
I waited to finish my bed of halitosis, then I laid down my towel, called David, and followed Patty into the house. I found her in the library, sitting bolt upright in Hugh's big green chair.
"Did you wash your face?" I asked, in a master-of-the-house way.
"No," said she, sulkily; "I changed my mind."
"It is your conscience that needs washing I am afraid, my dear."
"You wise woman! Well, it always comes to you for soap and water! Oh, Marg—"
And then I knew the whole tide was coming, and, being used to such confessions, sat down to hear it at my ease.
"Oh, Marg—"
"Patty, fairly patient by this time, leaned forward and looked up at me pitifully, "what do you think I have been doing now?"
"I am, philosophically," said I.
"Marg!" (the injured innocence of those soft blue eyes!) "do you really think it is as bad as that?"
"I really think so. You have a genius for getting into mischief, poor child."
"Yes!" said Patty, in doleful assent.
"Father says I am possessed with a devil sometimes. Well, anyhow, Marg, it is a merry imp!" and the blue eyes twinkled.
She was going through her usual spasmodic attack of confession; the first stage was rapidly passing, and Miss Martha beginning to see the joke. That was why she was so irreclaimable—she never got into a scrape without feeling the humor of the position more keenly than her fault. And Patty's scrapes were so very comical!
I sighed in pure protest against that twinkle of the old Adam.
"What is it this time, Patty?" I asked.
"Maquering," quoth Patty, with a lagoon in her person, for she knew well enough that her wonderful initiative talent was at the bottom of nearly all her misdeeds. "Oh, Margery, my friend, I could be as unkind as I like. I unfixed it then, and make haste, for it's nearly dinner time."
"Cold-hearted creature, to talk about dinner when I am so wretched! And really, Marg, this is something very serious."
"You can't frighten me, Patty Payne." The poor dear little lamb sighed sadly, and cast a pathetic glance in my direction. I took no notice and asked no questions, and my young lady finally had to come to the point.
"It was such a lovely morning, you know, Marg, dear, and the leaves such exquisite colors, I felt as I just must get up early, while the birds were singing and the dew on the grass, and go for a walk in the woods. I do so love nature!" in a melting tone.
"No hypocrisy, madam!" was my sole comment.
"You know my skirts always get so dragged walking in the dew, and my shoes soaking wet, and the briars and things tear me all to pieces."
"You little humbug," said I, with an affectionate smile.
"And it was so very early that I was sure nobody could possibly see me, so I—"
"Dressed yourself out in Toby's clothes!" Patty, Patty! You did that once before!"
"But nobody found me out," said Patty, with a delighted countenance. "Dear me, why is Toby so near my own size! It was always been a temptation to me, and I think it is very, very hard," with an air of deep affliction.
"You manage to live under the tree," I said, heartily.
"I do hope nobody found you out this time."
"Yes, that is what makes it so dreadful!—(you see that Patty's ideas of right and wrong were not very orthodox.)—I was just running through the lane, feeling refreshingly tomboyish and happy, when a gentleman on horseback came right on me. Oh, dear! I pulled Toby's cap down over my eyes and shrunk into the corner of the fence. I was really so mortified!"
"You poor child," I murmured, with the ready and misplaced sympathy that it was Patty's forte to extract from her friends.
"Yes, that is mortifying! And then he spoke to me. Oh, dear!"
"He said, 'Hello, boy there! What's your name?'"
"Toby Payne," I answered, shaking in Toby's shoes. With my cap very low down, and my voice a little shrill, I think I might pass for Toby. Don't you?"
"I can't say I do, Patty."
"At any rate, he said, 'One of old Dr. Payne's boys, I see. There are so many of you lads that it is hard to know you apart. So you are Toby? Well, Toby, will you do me a favor? I am going across the field there to see a sick workman—And then Marg—'"
An awful pause. Patty's mouth had puckered up, and her face pretentiously grave.
"Go on," I impatiently.
"He—asked me to hide it, but it was no use. She curled herself up in Hugh's chair and began to laugh."
"I could have shaken her. I told me the rest, and let me go and see about dinner," I said, coldly.
"A faint flicker of amusement curved the corners of Patty's mouth. She put her hand up to hide it, but it was no use. She curled herself up in Hugh's chair and began to laugh."
"Oh, Marg, it was too good!—and so very dreadful! When he came back he didn't say a word but just 'Thank you,' and got on his horse. Then he looked at me, carefully at first, and afterwards so coldly, with a slow, queer smile, and I felt all over what was the matter. I knew what he looked. He looked terrible! I put up my hand, and there they were, two odious plates hanging out from under Toby's cap, down to my knees!"
"Do you suppose he recognized you?" I asked, anxiously.
"How do I know. He didn't say a word, but rode off still smiling. I hope he thought I was empty. We are a good deal alike."
In Patty's own opinion she must have borne a general resemblance to the whole flock.
"Poor Toby!"
"Oh, Toby is so young it doesn't matter—only if father heard of it I will have to tell—I couldn't get her into a scrape. What shall I do?" In contrite despair.
I sat and thought. There was one person to whom I took all my problems. "I will ask Hugh," I said at last.
Patty did not reply. I looked up from my meditations to find her face crimsoned all over, and her blue eyes moist.
"I don't ever tell him," she said, miserably.
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"I am quite sure he didn't know me. Marg, it was Hugh himself!"
Hugh said nothing at the time. Patty choked down her tears with a truly beautiful effort at composure, and looked intensely pathetic as she tied on her hat. But after she had fairly started, home, Hugh seeing her to the gate, he came back to me.
"Marg," he said, severely, "I am surprised at you—indulging and lecturing that poor tender-hearted little thing."
That is the way the Pattys of this world get their deserts.
About six weeks later, a cold, bleak day, when the leaves were falling, and my heart depressed by the weather, as my heart's hearts are very apt to be, I was sitting on the front steps with a basket shawl drawn close about my shoulders, and a volume of Tupper's poems on my lap. Tupper was the fashion of that particular hour, but I could not fix my thoughts upon his empty measures. My eyes wandered to the bare tree tops and leaf-carpeted ground, to the cloudy sky and the rugged hills, seeing many fair and beautiful things as the eyes of reveries do. But they saw nothing they loved as well as Hugh coming in at the gate. Dear Hugh! I can recall now the very sound of his foot among the fallen leaves heaped ankle deep upon the walk. He was thirty-four, and I not seventeen, and there was only Hugh and I. Baby brother and sisters had died of measles, like little flowers, father and mother were to me but lovely shadows, so his love was the only home-love I had ever known.
You can see why I laid my hand in his when he sat down beside me, and put my head on his shoulder as I used to when I was a baby. And then he told me.
"Marg," he said, gravely, "I am going to be married in the spring."
"Oh, Hugh!"
My heart stood still, but I did not take my hand away, nor raise my head. He was just as much my Hugh as ever. Though not long before his new bride had half killed me now I saw a Roger! And the difference that made!
While I sat in agonized waiting for his next words, a sudden intuition came over me like a spasm. I clutched his arm and gasped out:
"Hugh! why Hugh, it surely can't be Patty Payne!"
"Marg," said he, when he came home,

"Isn't it a shame that Patty's own father should so misjudge her? Four, patient little dear!"
A day came at last—such a day! I don't think Hugh and Patty and I ever forgot it. It was intensely cold and keen and beautiful, and Patty had been spending it with me. It was almost dark when she left; a few stars were shining in the rosy-gray sky, and I was sorry Hugh was not there to take her home. He was late that night. I told her so at the gate, and begged her to come back and wait until after tea. She had been unusually and mysteriously gentle and caressing all day, and looked so pretty, standing there irresolute—really irresolute, for a fluttering color came and went on her cheeks, and she hesitated before she said:
"I think I had better go, Marg."
She came close to me, with a curious expression on her face. "How much does Hugh love me?" she asked. "He is so cold and grave to me, Margie; sometimes I don't think he loves me at all!"
I laughed, thinking how sweet she was, and how odd. "Harry home, Patty," I said, "if you will go. Hugh's love is worth more than a dozen little hangings like you!"
"Did you meet Patty?" I asked Hugh about an hour later as we sat in the library waiting for tea.
"Patty?" he said. "Was that Patty? I did see a girl on the other side of the road, but I never dreamed she would be out so late. It is a very long walk home; why did you let her go?"
"She would not be induced to stay, Hugh."
"You would not want her to stay, you mean?" said Hugh, almost pettily. "I thought you, at least, loved Patty dearly."
"Somewhere to see Miss Margie," said David, our man, from the entry, with a shrill voice proceeding from the dinner behind him.
"Miss Margie, may I come right in? I've got real nice eggs and some walnuts for you and Mr. Hugh, and come all this long way to see the two of you."
"Oh, dear! I am afraid it is Aunt Dolly," said I to Hugh, in a whisper, for a humpbacked and very tiny old woman had pushed past David into the room, and was setting a big round basket down beside the door.
"Aunt Dolly! It is, to be sure, my dear lamb," cried the queer old creature, whose name was evidently sharp if her front was wrinkled and her feet noisy as over my childhood's capstaple, and I was like a hickory nut, and Mr. Hugh minds me well, if you don't."
"I do remember you, now that I can see you, aunt," I said, in some confusion.
"Aunt Dolly!" was an unpleasant not old woman who had nursed me through a long sickness when I was about ten years old, and though I never quite got over my childish antipathy to the humpbacked and wrinkled face, she always seemed to cherish a fond feeling for "her child," as she persisted in calling me. I was a year or so after my recovery she used to come in to see me almost monthly; but it had been nearly five years since I had seen her at all. Now she stood there blinking at me; a familiar, old-fashioned figure in her short skirts and frilled cap, while her long blue flannel cloak only exaggerated her deformity. She was always scrupulously clean, but there was the same faint smell of cheap tobacco about her, and I was sure that the same old corkscrew pipe was hidden away in her reticule.
"Sit down, Aunt Dolly," said Hugh, who never forgot to be polite, and I got up to give her a chair. But she remained standing, looking intently at me.
"And this is Miss Peggy?" said she in her cracked voice. "Dear, dear me! What a young lady she has grown! It's been over five long years since I seen you, child."
"Yet you don't live very far," I suggested by way of conversation, feeling very ill at ease.
"To be sure. But twelve miles is a long tramp for old bones."
"You don't mean to say you walked in?" cried Hugh.
"No; a neighbor gave me a lift; but I walked the last two miles."
"Which way did you come?" I said, probably because I had nothing else to say.
Her pucker'd old face peered at me from under her immense cap frills in a way that made my flesh creep. "I come the long way because the lane back of Payne's lot is under water as high as my own cap."
"Under water?" cried Hugh. "How? Why?"
"The mill-dam down to Putnam's broke, and the river is most up to Payne's back-door."
"When?"
"I heard of it on the road. It was just after sundown, I guess."
"I never heard of it," said Hugh, blankly. "My God!"
"It is awful!" continued the old woman, with that taste for horror that such people always display. "Two men were drowned in it, and great planks from the mill were a-bobbing down the lane—so I heard."

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